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The Lincoln Kinsman

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The Pennsylvania Hank Family

LINCOLN'S ALLEGED ROYAL DESCENT TRACED THROUGH
SARAH EVANS HANK

The most sensational statement ever made about Abraham Lincoln's maternal line of descent appeared in David Starr Jourdan's book, *Your Family Tree*, published about a dozen years ago in which it was alleged the President descended from royalty. In collaboration with the distinguished genealogist, Sarah Louise Kimball, the authors traced the maternal ancestry of Lincoln to both Charlemagne and Alfred the Great.

The family with which the Hankes intermarried, that made possible the alleged descent, was named Evans. Cadwallader Evans was the son of Evan Lloyd Evans of Wales and was the youngest of four brothers migrating to America. He died at Gwynedd, Pennsylvania on May 20, 1745. It is true that the ancestral line of Cadwallader Evans has been traced back through a line of Welshmen to Eva Marshall, an English woman who was the wife of William, sixth Baron de Brasse. Following the line through the Earl of Pembroke, thence as one

reviewer puts it, "through a long and intricate but unmistakable family tree, the line is traced through to Charlemagne, great ruler of the ancient Franks, and Alfred the Great, king of England."

Cadwallader and Ellen (Morris) Evans of Gwynedd, Pennsylvania, had a daughter Sarah who married John Hank (ab) of Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania on October 10, 1711. It was through this union that the tracing of Lincoln's royal descent was attempted. There are many theories extant which would connect Nancy Hanks, the mother of Lincoln, with this John Hank, who married Sarah Evans, and some of them will be considered in this issue of *The Kinsman*.

Several descendants of John Hank (ab) of Pennsylvania have contributed to our knowledge of the family, but to Mrs. Myra Hank Rudolph, Warren, Ohio is due the most credit for gathering and organizing information about the Hank colony.

Her conclusions were printed in four installments of *The Monroe Watchman*, published at Union, West Virginia in the issues of April 24, May 1, May 8, and May 15, 1930. Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock of Cambridge, Massachusetts and Mrs. Charles T. White of Brookline, Massachusetts gathered much of the source material that made possible a documentary history of the family. The editor of *The Kinsman* has also done considerable research work in Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia court houses in tracing the movements of this family.

It is fortunate from the viewpoint of the biographer that the early members of the Hank family were affiliated with the Quaker or Friends church, and it is from the pages of the record books of these devout people that we have been able to discover many notations recording the vital statistics of the family.

Origin of the Family

The Hank family originated in Derbyshire, England. The first man by the name of Hank to come to America was named Luke. He was a widower whose wife, Jane Wheatcroft Hank, had passed away on February 7, 1680 in England. Sometime between the date of his wife's death and 1682 Luke arrived on this side of the Atlantic and entered land in what was then Chester County, Pennsylvania. He may have been twice a widower as he was forty-six years old at the time of his marriage to Jane, and it appears as if a daughter named Elizabeth, who was much too old to have been the daughter of Jane Hank, accompanied him to America. Luke's only child by Jane Hank, was a son Luke, but it is not

known whether he survived infancy, as he was but six days old when his mother died. Luke purchased two tracts of land in Chester County in 1682. After the marriage of his daughter, Elizabeth, in 1693, he returned to England and died at his old home there in 1701.

It is the brother of this Luke Hank of Derbyshire, England in whom we have particular interest, however. His name was John (a), and he had two sons, Luke (aa) and John (ab). Most of the settlers of Darby township, Chester (now Delaware) County, Pennsylvania were from the elder John's home in Derbyshire, England, and it is in Chester that we discover the first Hank colony of this particular branch in America. John Hank (ab) was a witness to a marriage there as early as 1698. It was in this same community where the first emigrant, Luke, had lived before.

In the records of the Friends meeting at Gwynedd, however, we find valuable entries which contributed much to the beginning of the genealogical history of the family in America. On November 10, 1711 John Hank (ab) married Sarah Evans, daughter of Cadwallader Evans. John died in 1731 and his widow married Thomas Williams. From the Burlington Quaker records we learn that on July 22, 1737 John Hank (aaa) of Philadelphia, son of Luke, Derbyshire, England, and Rebecca Bryan, daughter of Thomas Bryan, were married. These two Johns and their families furnish the background for a study of the American branch of the family.

Some confusion is caused by the many different forms of the name of Hank, as it is found spelled Hanck,

Hancke, Hank, Hanke and Hanks, also in each instance the "n" often appears to be a "w." Except where quotations are used or familiar names spelled otherwise we shall abide by the spelling Hank in this monograph as that seems to be the predominant spelling in this branch of the family.

Nancy, Traditional Daughter of John Hank (aba)

Many of the earlier biographers of Abraham Lincoln were convinced that both his paternal and maternal ancestry lived as neighbors in Berks County, Pennsylvania, and migrated together to Rockingham County, Virginia where they were again associated. In this county it was alleged that both the father and mother of Abraham Lincoln were born. These biographers drew their conclusions from the facts that the Lincolns and Hankses were neighbors, rather than from any traditions or early family folklore which had been preserved.

Howard M. Jenkins in his *Historical Collections of Gwynedd* was one of the earliest authors to place emphasis upon the probable association of the Lincoln and Hank family in Pennsylvania. He states, "John Hank lived on the Perkiomen Turnpike six miles east of Reading in Exeter Township, Berks County and within half a mile of Mordecai Lincoln, great-grandfather of the President. This John Hank with John and Benjamin Lincoln moved to Fayette County and from there Hank went southward."

Charles C. Coffin, one of the more dependable biographers of Lincoln, brings the families together in Berks County, Pennsylvania and has them emigrating to Rockingham County, Virginia about the same time. He

states, "John Hanks, Junior and John and Thomas Lincoln sold their farms in Union (Pennsylvania), made their way across the Potomac River and settled near Harrisonburg, Virginia." (p. 8).

Coffin again mentions the two families upon their arrival in Kentucky, "We have seen John Lincoln and John Hanks settling side by side in the Shenandoah Valley. The children of Abraham Lincoln were in Kentucky. It is not strange that the descendants of John Hanks should also be there. Joseph Hanks had emigrated to Kentucky. He was a carpenter of Elizabethtown. Shall we think it strange that Thomas Lincoln, who was working with him found pleasure in the society of his nieces—Lucy, Elizabeth, Polly and Nancy Hanks?" (p. 14, 15.)

Descendants of the Rockingham County Hank family, basing their testimonies on family tradition, have long claimed relationship to Abraham Lincoln. One of the members of the family stated that an Ohio history gave the names of her paternal grandparents, William Cherrington and his wife, Margaret Hank (abah), and claimed that Margaret was a "sister of Nancy Hanks, Abraham Lincoln's mother." The informant then concluded, "Yes I know an aunt raised Nancy. I cannot say just why. She was much younger than Margaret. There were several children."

Another Cherrington kinsman, a grandson of Margaret Hank Cherrington (abah), states in a letter dated March 12, 1895, "My grandmother had a sister much younger than herself who is said to have married Thomas Lincoln about 1806 and became the mother of the world's great-

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est benefactor, Abraham Lincoln."

A great-grandson of Margaret Hank, widow of John (aba), who moved to Rockingham County about 1777, stated in a letter dated April 7, 1895 that he could only remember the names of four of Margaret's children; John, the Revolutionary soldier; William, his grandfather; Margaret, who married Cherrington, and Nancy, who married the father of Abraham Lincoln. The correspondent said, "I have often heard father speak of his aunt marrying Lincoln."

A descendant of Caleb Hank (abagb) makes this statement in a letter written to Mrs. Hitchcock on November 6, 1899, "Before Lincoln was known this Caleb Hank, my grandfather, used to say that an aunt of his had moved to Kentucky and married a man by the name of Lincoln, giving an accent on the last syllable. After Lincoln became prominent, he asserted as his belief that they were cousins."

Most of the traditions about the parentage of Nancy Hanks which have originated with the Hank family, claim that John (aba) was the father of Nancy. It is not known whether John died before the migration of the family to Rockingham

County, Virginia, but nine children were born to John and Margaret by 1774. At least two sons and four daughters accompanied the mother at the time of removal into the Shenandoah Valley.

John Hank (aba), the oldest son of John (ab), was born in 1712 and married Margaret Williams in February 1737, according to the Gwynedd meeting records, and continued to attend there until 1850 when he and his wife affiliated with Richland meeting, but two years later they returned to Gwynedd. The last we learn of John Hank is in the records of Gwynedd under the date of January 26, 1768 when he was in controversy over some money matters. The general consensus of opinion is that John died previous to 1774 when his wife, Margaret, requested a letter of removal from Gwynedd meeting.

Margaret Hank, possibly then a widow, placed her membership with the Hopewell meeting of Virginia, in 1777, and the records of this meeting contain many notations of the family. As late as 1784 Margaret was listed in the commission book of Rockingham County as the head of a family of four persons.

The name Nancy never appears in the contemporary records of the John Hank family in either Pennsylvania or Virginia, although the children of John and Margaret are often mentioned. Furthermore Margaret Hank was called "widow" in the church register as early as 1781 and she had probably been a widow for several years. Although the exact birthdate of Lincoln's mother is not known, it is never placed earlier than 1783 or later than 1786. In 1784, the birthdate most often used, Margaret Hank,

the wife of John Hank, had been a widow many years and was then sixty-four years of age.

It would seem foolish, indeed, to attempt to trace Abraham Lincoln's royal descent from Charlemagne through an infant born to a sixty-four year old widow, whose husband apparently had been dead for a decade.

Nancy, Traditional Daughter of Joseph Hank (abg)

The claim of Lincoln's royal descent through Cadwallader Evans' daughter, Sarah, who married John Hank (ab), is not entirely eliminated by the discovery that Sarah's oldest son John (aba) and his wife, Margaret, could not possibly have been parents of the President's mother, Nancy Hanks. There was another son of John and Sarah, named Joseph (abg), through whom it also is claimed the royal line of descent can be traced.

Lea and Hutchinson in their book, *The Ancestry of Abraham Lincoln*, were under the impression that Joseph was the father of Nancy and stated, "The family removed to Rockingham County, in the immediate vicinity of the Lincolns, adding greatly to the probabilities." (p. 117). The authors also made an effort to identify the Joseph Hanks of Hardin County, Kentucky with the Joseph Hank of Berks County, Pennsylvania. It is doubtful if either of these Josephs was ever in Rockingham County, Virginia, the alleged place of arrival from Pennsylvania and of departure for Kentucky.

The Lea and Hutchinson conclusion has been presented in a slightly different version by a recent biographer, J. Huston Harrison, in his

book, *Settlers by the Long Trail*. He tried to identify as kinsman of the President a "Brother Hanks" and a "Sister Hanks" who were members of the same church in Rockingham County to which "Brother Lincoln" belonged. This was his conclusion:

"Considering the circumstances it appears highly probable that 'Bro. Hanks' was Joseph (Jr.) who resided with his mother Nancy, and that Nancy, the future wife of Thomas Lincoln was stopping with her grandmother when some occasion of the neighborhood, perchance one of the identical church meetings of these old minutes, happened to lead to their introduction." (p. 443).

Still another version of the story comes from Harry M. Strickler in his book, *Old Tenth Legion Marriages*, where he calls attention to the marriage in Rockingham County, of a certain John Hank and Anny Runnion. He states with reference to the bride, Anny or Nancy (Runnion) Hank; "This may have been the mother of Abraham Lincoln. Nancy having married a second time Thomas Lincoln." (p. 63).

It was undoubtedly the same Nancy who married John Hank on January 19, 1800, who appears on the church records as "Sister Nancy Hanks." She was a candidate for baptism in the church on October 8, 1808, four months before Abraham Lincoln was born. Nancy Runnion Hank was still a member of the congregation in 1818, which happens to be the same year that the mother of Abraham Lincoln died in Indiana. Undoubtedly it is the same Nancy Runnion Hank who conveyed land in 1829 to her children Isaac, Daniel, Mary and John (Rockingham County Deed

Book, p. 39 v. 9). The 1810 census shows John Hank (Sr.) with three sons and one daughter. It is not known, if so, how this family was related to the Pennsylvania Hank family.

To get back to the traditional "Brother Joseph" of Rockingham County, whom we have now learned to be "Brother John Hanks," husband of "Sister Nancy Hanks," we must give up any hope of bringing Joseph's widow back to Rockingham County, as it is quite certain the widow of Joseph Hank of Kentucky returned to Amelia County, Virginia.

Joseph Hank (abg), son of John (ab), was born in 1725 at White-marsh township. His parents were associated with the Gwynedd Friends in whose church register the births of the children were recorded. When Joseph was 27 years old he is noted as having had some difficulty with this church and one year later in 1753 he removed into the community of the Exeter meeting. His certificate of removal from Gwynedd was approved but he did not present it at Exeter until over a year later, on May 30, 1754. On October 26, 1754 this testimony was read against him in the Exeter church:

"Whereas Joseph Hank by a Certificate sent after him from North Wales (Gwynedd) is found to be of our Society, but not adhering to the Witness of God in his own heart, and likewise Marrying one of another Profession for which he has refused to give Satisfaction. We do therefore hereby Disown the said Joseph Hank to be of our Society until he gives manifest sign of True Repentance, which we heartily Desire he may."

At the following meeting of the

church it was noted that as he desired no appeal he ceased to be a member of the Exeter meeting. It is of interest to note that at this time when Joseph Hank was living in Exeter community Abraham Lincoln, paternal grandfather of the President, was living in the same township.

Joseph Hank apparently remained in the community until his neighbor, John Lincoln's boy, Abraham, grew to maturity. Joseph was taxed in Reading township from 1754 to 1763 and in Exeter township from 1779 to 1783. As late as 1793 there was a Joseph Hank whose name appeared in the records of West Chester as having sold land at that time.

Inasmuch as Joseph Hank was not in good standing with the church after his marriage we have no means of learning the number of children or their names. The name of his wife is not known although it may have been Ann. The first account of Joseph which we have after his birth is the signing as a witness to a will made by John Edwards of Montgomery County, on April 9, 1749. The month before an Ann Hanks is mentioned in the will of Olliver Williams in the same county.

It is not likely that Joseph Hank born in 1725 was the father of a daughter Nancy, born sixty years later. If the line of royal descent is to be traced through Joseph Hank, the son of Sarah Evans Hank, apparently there is another generation between Joseph and the mother of Lincoln for which we will have to account. There is no documentary evidence available which would support the theory of David Starr Jourdan or the traditions of the Hank family that Abraham Lincoln's line

of descent can be traced through Sarah Evans who married John Hank.

Hank Genealogy

The genealogy of the Hank family is not continued beyond the sixth generation as that is sufficiently late enough for descendants still living to make accurate family connections. Of course the entire genealogy is fragmentary, but this abbreviated outline may contribute to a more exhaustive compilation in the future.

First Generation

a. John, ?-1679.

Second Generation

aa. Luke, 1673-(1737).

Brown, Hannah.

ab. John, 1676-?

Evans, Sarah.

Third Generation

aaa. John, ?-(1772).

Brian, Rebecca.

aba. John, 1712-(1781).

Williams, Margaret.

abb. Jane, 1714-1762.

Roberts, John.

abc. Elizabeth, 1716-?

Evans, John.

abd. William, 1719-?

Died in infancy.

abe. William, 1720-1796.

abf. Samuel, 1723-?

Going, Sarah.

abg. Joseph, 1725-?

abh. Sarah, 1728-?

Fourth Generation

aaaa. Hannah, 1738-?

aaab. John, ?-(1829).

Ewing (Evans) Rachel.

— — —

abaa. John, 1738-?

Never married.

abab. Caleb, ?-1770.

Married but no offspring.

abac. Jane, ?-1745.

Deceased early in life.

abad. Joshua, ?-1758.

Deceased early in life.

abae. Susannah, ?-?

Bryan, Thomas.

abaf. Ellen, ?-?

Never married.

abag. William, 1754-1823.

Berry, Susannah.

abah. Margaret, 1755-1797.

Cherrington, William.

abai. Hannah, 1760-?

Lupton, Asa.

— — —

ab??a. Daniel, 1771-1821.

Masterson, Mary.

ab??b. John, 1779-1849.

Bell,

Fifth Generation

abaga. David, 1788-1854.

1. Tackett, Sarah.

2. Parsons, Elizabeth.

3. Dalzell, Sarah

(Stanley).

abagb. Caleb, 1789-1869.

1. Smith, Nancy.

2. Rayhill, Elizabeth.

3. Matthews, Mary Ann.

4. Dixon, Hermion

(Weeks).

abagc. Margaret, 1792-1808.

Never married.

abagd. John, 1794-1831.

Price, Rebecca.

abage. William, 1796-1869.

Peale, Serena.

abagf. Mary, 1798-1857.

Smith, Christopher.

abagg. Jehu, 1801-1881.

1. Brattan, Malvina D.

2. Berger, Susan K.

Sixth Generation

abagaa. George Berry, 1827-?

Weed, Olive.

abagab. Nancy, 1828-?
 abagac. James Williams, 1830-?
 abagad. Jehu B., 1832-?
 abagae. John Parsons, 1833-?
 abagaf. Caleb Robert, 1836-?
 abagag. Susannah, 1838-?
 abagah. Sarah Elizabeth, 1842-?
 abagai. Mary Catherine, 1850-?
 Liddle, William H.
 abagaj. David, 1854-?
 — — —

abagba. Mary, 1809-1882.
 Cherrington, Jefferson.
 abagbb. Susan, 1811-?
 Wood, Archibald.
 abagbc. Margaret Williams, 1815-?
 Cherrington, Clinton.
 abagbd. William, 1815-?
 abagbe. Sarah, 1819-?
 Shiers, Christopher.
 abagbf. Eliza, 1821-?
 Knapp, Moses.

abagbg. David, 1823-?
 abagbh. Infant.
 abagbi. Infant.
 abagbj. Jane B., 1833-1856.
 Ewing, John.

abagbk. Alvin Ewing, 1835-?
 Abbott, Lydia.
 abagbl. Isabel Virginia, 1838-?
 Ewing, William.
 abagbm. Nancy Ann, 1840-?
 Ewing, Henry.

abagbn. Rebecca Ellen, 1842-?
 McClung, Robert.
 abagbo. John William, 1844-?
 Rice, Mildred.
 abagbp. Caleb, 1847-1893.
 Davis, Laura.
 — — —

abagda. Eliza, ?-?
 abagbd. Margaret, ?-?
 abagdc. Thomas, ?-1831.

abagea. John William Fletcher,
 1826-?
 Keener, Anna.
 abageb. Jehu Newman, 1827-?
 abagec. James Bernard, 1829-?
 abaged. Armenius Summerfield,
 1831-?
 abagee. Susan Catherine, 1833-?
 abagef. Emory Waugh, 1836-?
 — — —
 abagga. Virginia, 1830-1830.
 abaggb. Josiah Dickinson, 1835-?
 abaggc. Susan, 1838-?
 Morgan,
 abaggd. Malvina D., 1840-?
 Woolwine,
 abagge. Fanny, 1842-?
 Joice,
 abaggf. David, 1846-?
 Leonidas,
 abaggg. Wilbur F., 1848-?

Associated Families
Roberts

The children of John and Jane Hank (abb) Roberts were Cadwallader, John, Elizabeth, Ruth, Sarah, Ann, Jane, Mary, Job and John.

Smith

The children of Christopher and Mary Hank (abagf) Smith were Caleb Hank, 1828; Susan Catherine, 1830; Jehu Hammett, 1832; John William, 1834; Mary Virginia, 1836; and William Monroe, 1838.

Cherrington

The children of William and Margaret Hank (abah) Cherrington were Thomas, 1779; John, 1781; William, 1787; Rachel, 1784; Clement, 1791; Susan, 1789; Ellen, 1794; and Josiah, 1797.

Bryan

The children of Thomas and Susannah Hank (abae) Bryan were John, Benjamin, Thomas, Ahaz, Margaret and Ellen.